Copenhagen: A Matter Of Sovereignty

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By Steven Groves

The Heritage Foundations Steven Groves and Ben Lieberman are live at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference reporting from a conservative perspective. Follow their reports on The Foundry and at the Copenhagen Consequences Web site.

Climate change negotiations here in Copenhagen have apparently hit a speed bump because the United States and China are in a dispute over a sovereignty issue. But it is China, ironically, that is raising a fuss about intrusions within its borders.

This impasse is ironic since it is the United States that should be most jealous of guarding its sovereignty in the face of what could be a major intrusion by the international community on U.S. energy policy.

China, it seems, is unwilling to allow any foreign country or international organization to monitor its compliance with its treaty obligations"specifically its obligation to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. That unwillingness is apparently a non-starter for the United States. Massachusetts House member Edward Markey"a lead Democrat voice on climate change"understands that Chinas lack of transparency is problematic:

œIf China or any other country wants to be a full partner in global climate efforts, that country must commit to transparency and review of their emissions-cutting regime. ¦ Without that commitment, other governments and industries, including those in America, will be hesitant to engage with those countries when they try to partner on global warming.

The United States must jealously guard its sovereignty, but unlike China the U.S. has a tradition of transparency, a free press, and a separation of government powers. All of those factors would permit the U.S. to demonstrate compliance with any climate treaty"however misguided that treaty may be"without the intrusion of a new international climate bureaucracy into U.S. domestic policy.

In the end, China"the worlds top GHG emitter"may be allowed off the hook when it comes to international verification of its treaty obligations, while the U.S. would be required to submit to intrusive international inspection.

Such a result would be not only ironic, but disastrous.

Steven Groves writes at The Heritage Foundation and he is the Bernard and Barbara Lomas Fellow at The Heritage Foundation's Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom.

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